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‘The Argument of the Broken Pane’, Suffragette Consumerism and Newspapers

by

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Abstract

Within the cutthroat world of newspapers advertising the newspapers of Britain's Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) *Votes for Women* and *The Suffragette* managed to achieve a balance that has often proved to be an impossible challenge for social movement press – namely the maintenance of a highly political stance whilst simultaneously exploiting the market system with advertising and merchandising. When the militant papers advocated window smashing of West End stores in 1912 - 13, the companies who were the target still took advertisements. Why? What was the relationship between news values, militant violence, and advertising income? 'Do-it-yourself' journalism operated within a context of ethical consumerism and promotionally orientated militancy. This resulted in newspaper connections between politics, commerce and a distinct market profile, evident in the customization of advertising, retailer dialogue with militants, and longer-term loyalty – symptomatic of a wider trend towards newspaper commercialism during this period.

Keywords: suffragettes, *Votes for Women*, *The Suffragette*, window smashing, advertisers, ethical consumerism, WSPU.

Main text

Advertisers 'judge the character of the reader by the character of the periodical' (George French, *Advertising: the Social and Economic Problem*, 1915)

'The argument of the broken window pane is the most valuable argument in modern politics' (Emmeline Pankhurst, *Votes for Women*, 23 Feb.1912).

Introduction and contexts

One of the great achievements of the many and various activist women's groups in Britain was their ability – despite, or more likely because of the movement's diversity – to maintain a high, if fluctuating, public profile for a sustained period in history. They attained this in large measure through their use of newspapers, both their own and the mainstream for publicity. Within the cutthroat

world of newspaper advertising the newspapers of the militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU hereafter) *Votes for Women* and from 1912, *The Suffragette*, managed to achieve a balance that had often proved to be an impossible challenge for many – namely the maintenance of a highly political stance whilst simultaneously exploiting the market system with advertising and merchandising, and thereby extending their message. Amazingly, when *The Suffragette* was advocating arson and window smashing of West End Stores, the companies who were the target still advertised in the paper. In terms of column inches, at the height of the violence the newspaper comprised 22% advertising in December 1912 and 20 % in September 1913 (Harrison, 1982, 282).

Advertisements formed part of a synergy between editorial ideas and the development of a commercial identity aimed at enhancing the movement's cohesion. Using a range of advertiser and suffragette contemporary records for qualitative analysis, and close readings of both promotional and editorial material in the militant newspapers mentioned above, this article unpicks that relationship during the peak of civil disobedience, focusing in particular on the window smashing campaign. Methodology aims to identify connections between editorial and advertising in *Votes for Women* and *The Suffragette*. Why were advertisers attracted to the WSPU with its motto of 'deeds not words'? What was the relationship between news values, militant violence, and advertising income? Why, when advertisers became the targets of window smashing, did they not withdraw their financial support for the organisations that used violence against them? The hypothesis examined is that a combination of ethical consumerism and promotionally orientated militancy, achieved through 'do-it-yourself' journalism, created not only a suffragette profile but also an identifiable market that ensured advertiser loyalty.

The synergy between advertising and political tactics represented one outcome of a long running attempt by women's rights activists to gain ground in the public sphere, using both newspapers and consumer activism as vehicles for furthering their aims. The WSPU's increasingly large rallies, torchlight processions and costume parades rendered British suffrage activism into public entertainment, but their civil disobedience in the form of cutting telegraph lines, pouring acid on golf

courses, setting fire to mailboxes, burning unused churches, racecourse stands, cricket pavilions and smashing numerous windows – all in the cause of a last ditch attempt to win the vote, proved more controversial. Such tactics are well known, and as moderates pointed out, often appeared to rebound against the movement itself[i]. What has not been researched is how militant activists combined violent tactics with a use of their press to develop a commercial organisational image. This was achieved by simultaneously encouraging the commercial development of their own newspapers as mouthpieces for reforming ideas and reflections of an image conscious community of identity with a focus on fundraising. Thus the various parts of the suffrage movement developed a whole commercial culture centred on their own organisations with an integrated strategy that combined marketing (in the form of posters, logos, colours, merchandising) with politics.

Ethical consumerism as female empowerment

For women, consumer politics provided another means of empowerment – referred to by Nancy Fraser as women's 'counter-civil society' (ed. Calhoun, 109-42). 'Ethical consumerism' (in modern day parlance), influenced by French thinking[ii], where consumers were encouraged by a range of social organizations to use their material position for the furtherance of moral and public causes, provided activists with choice and some control over daily domestic expenditure. The concept of social movement consumerism received an intellectual boost in 1904 with the publication of *Consumers' Co-operative Societies* by Charles Gide, an eminent French professor of political economy and defender of empire, who was to become a tireless champion of the cooperative movement in the first third of the 20th century. His book acted as the bible and an inspiration for suffrage activist Theresa Billington-Greig's book *Consumer in Revolt* (1912). Equally, the political clout of consumer direct action was demonstrated in Britain by female suffrage supporters of The Women's Tax Resistance League (1909-1917), who had their goods seized and auctioned by the authorities and were jailed.

Reader-consumers in turn were urged to support shops that advertised – especially promotions by Oxford Street stores – and readers were also encouraged to visit shops to solicit advertising for their paper (Tusan, 2005,154; DiCenzo, 2000, 6, 2, 122). *Votes for Women* gave unequivocal editorial

support to advertisers, promising to deliver to them the business of readers. Thus suffrage consumerism became an integral part of the growth of suffrage organisations, and part of the process of community building: Emmeline Pankhurst, who had run a fancy goods shop, believed that a business background was beneficial for women. Militancy became fashionable. Readers were encouraged in their identity as consumers by adverts that reminded them to purchase from retailers who supported their organisation. They could also shop for WSPU souvenirs at the Union's *The Women's Press* in Charing Cross Road, that offered consumer goods such as a board game called 'Pank-a-Squith', in which a suffragette protester overcomes obstacles in order to finally reach Downing Street (Norden, 1992, 35), along with stationary, novelties, jewellery, chocolate, marmalade, soap and bone china tea sets in WPSU colours. They could even engage the services of a special interior decorator to furnish rooms in the Union's colours (DiCenzo, 2000, 6, 2, 121), and also enjoy politically correct cigarettes. *Votes for Women* carried an advertisement headed 'Votes for Women Cigarettes': Virginia, Egyptian or Turkish blends were offered, with bulk order prices 'Printed in the Colours of the Union', specially produced by Vallora and Co., 170 Picadilly (30 September, 1910, 842). Department stores even sold underwear in purple, white and green.

The importance of using the colours to create a collective brand identity was articulated by Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence when giving instructions to supporters about what to wear on the first large demonstration: 'White or cream tussor should if possible be the dominant colour; the purple and green should be introduced where other colour is necessary…If every individual woman in this union would do her part the colours would become the reigning fashion. And strange as it may seem, nothing would so help to popularise the WPSU.' (Caine, 2003,5). In1909 the newspaper carried an article 'Where Dresses in the Colours can be Bought', with a department store illustrative advert next to it for coats (*Votes for Women*, 23April, 588). Equally, Christabel proclaimed that 'suffragettes must not be dowdy' and urged them to shop at Selfridges, the new glitzy store that had opened in March 1909. Four years later, when *The Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who* was launched, the department store advertised itself as 'Selfridge and Co: The Modern Woman's Club-Store' on the book's purple cover, adding a running banner line at the bottom of each page saying : 'the needs of the modern

woman are carefully studied at Selfridge's' (Crawford, 2013). The movement itself was similarly promotional: *Votes for Women* was promoted by press carts carrying advertisements or by lines of women holding parasols in the colours (Norden, ibid, 34-35).

The WSPU aimed to communicate its messages as widely as possible, to the extent that advertising was not seen as a compromise, but as an expedient that represented a form of legitimation by the outside (commercial) world. *Votes for Women* explained the contemporary logic: fashion and image were compatible with politics. 'Behold the present-day Suffragette pondering fashions side by side with political problems, for she is an essentially up-to-date being' (7 July, 1911, 7). From a contemporary perspective, feminists needed to show that they were 'womanly' in order to dispel negative press propagation of the 'shrieking sister' image (Chapman and Nuttall, 2011, 253). Respectability of the sex indicated capacity to govern.

Of course, purchasing power, a pre-requisite for smart dress, was a middle class phenomenon. In working class homes few wives were left with enough money to spend on themselves, but in 1906 the WSPU took a deliberate decision to focus on middle class women.[iii] Throughout central London, a host of stores, coffee shops and tea shops could be found that acted not only as meeting points for suffrage supporters, but also helped to define one's political allegiance. So, for instance, the more affluent WSPU tended to shop at Selfridges, and to wear more flamboyant, expensive fashion, whereas the more moderate, and less wealthy NUWSS, under Mrs Fawcett's leadership, frequented Derry and Toms, Burberry, and Swan and Edgar, and sported more sober, practical attire. Tea and coffee shops, and restaurants, were also frequented by either one faction or the other, but not both. In 1910 Alan's Tea Shop in Oxford Street announced in *Votes for Women*: 'A large room may be enjoyed for meetings etc. No charge for members of the WSPU' (30 September, 847). Selfridge's rooftop restaurant was a favourite meeting place of the WSPU. Harry Gordon Selfridge was a suffrage supporter and it is claimed that he allowed the WSPU flag to be flown from the roof of his department store when Emmeline Pankhurst emerged from jail.

'Do-It-Yourself' newspapers contexts

Women's suffrage groups, like the labour movement and political parties, developed their own networks with premises, clubs, printing presses and libraries (Chapman, 2013, 117-141). For women, France had provided an inspiration with *La Fronde*, a national daily staffed entirely by women, not only journalists and editor, but also typesetters, and compositors – only the concierge in the smart, new Parisian building was male.[iv] What distinguishes British suffrage groups is the extent to which they expanded the discursive public space by their creation of 'counter discourses', a trend that supports the theorisations of Nancy Fraser in terms of its implications for the Habermasian definitions of the public sphere (Fraser in ed. Calhoun, 109-42). In 1910 *The Times* reported twenty-one suffrage organisations where there had only been three previously, the third main suffrage paper (in addition to *Common Cause* and *Votes for Women*) being *The Vote*, the journal of a militant but non-violent society entitled the Women's Freedom League. This organization had been set up following a split in the WSPU in 1907. Splits amongst militants tended to result in more newspapers: Christabel Pankhurst's rejection of the Pethick-Lawrences [v] led to the additional launch of *The Suffragette* (1912-20); the disagreement in 1913 between Christabel and her sister Sylvia (see footnote iii) resulted in the *Women's Dreadnought*. In addition there were other papers produced by some of the hundreds of groups that were formed along religious, social, political, local or professional lines, some were denominational suffrage journals, others were militant or non-militant and there were also those that were partisan in their politics.

Thus there was not one movement, but several differing strands that provided a regular flow of arguments in their newspapers. The pages of their papers reveal reviews, announcements and notices, classified columns, and advertisements for services as evidence of 'counter-culture'. Women's papers increasingly emulated the commercial approach of Fleet Street, the style of New Journalism, with human-interest features, catchy headlines, illustrations and photos. This followed the more general trend of the period to use advertising as a means of achieving financial viability and legitimacy (Chapman, 2005; Baldalsty, 1999). Classified advertisement sections of both *Votes for Women* and the *Suffragette* were extensive.

Simultaneously, militant women's movements and their newspapers were influenced by a further trend of the period to favour drama and sensationalism in news values. Suffrage organizations wanted to engage with the press, but the WSPU 'actions not words' approach only fed press cravings for stories that had the effect of evoking a sense of outrage and other emotional reactions on the part of the reader – in turn effecting female activists' behaviour and response. Such press coverage constituted a 'must have' essential for campaigns. In 1910 Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence commented in *Votes for Women* that 'In these modern times women who have a great cause to advocate come out into the open.' (15 July, 689).

If press was to be empowering, communications had to be manipulated and managed. As already stated, this was not achieved by the intermediary of public relations agencies as it is today, but by women (and men) themselves. The curiosity of the local and national press needed to be stimulated by the promise of an unique event, but tactics to court such publicity became controversial. The scale of suffrage activity devoted to achieving media attention should not be underestimated, and is relevant to the relationship between news values and militant tactics. As success led to further promotional efforts in the face of parliamentary intransigence, militants became prisoners of their own attention seeking 'public press' promotion, because mainstream press news values dictated that violence would receive more attention than peaceful activism.

The dual purpose of communications – to influence public opinion externally, but also internally to strengthen gendered identity associated with suffrage – may have created a profile for advertisers but it also produced its own tensions, acknowledged by the WSPU itself: 'The demand that *Votes for Women* has to meet is twofold. In the first place, there is a growing desire for knowledge on the part of the outside public…..The magnitude of this demand may be gauged by the fact that already during 1907 the WSPU has effected a sale, exclusive of leaflets, of 80,000 books, pamphlets, and other publications. In the second place, it has to supply all those women who are at work within the ranks a bulletin of the doings of the Union…. and enable them to devote their work …to the furtherance of

agitation.' (*Votes for Women*, Oct. 1907,1). Indeed, the paper devoted an increasing amount of space between 1909 and 1912 to schemes aimed at boosting circulation, as well as documenting its own history and celebrating its own achievements as evidence of influence. This level of activity did not go unnoticed by advertisers. According to a supplement to *Votes for Women* (1st Oct.1909), in less than 2 years between 1907 and 1909 the circulation of *Votes for Women* rose from 200 per month to an impressive 30,000 per week, with its highest circulation between 1909 and 1912 – reaching 40,000 at its peak (Pankhurst, 1931, 223).

Press lobbying was relatively sophisticated: in 1912 the London Society for Women's Suffrage had thirty-three press secretaries working in sixty-one constituencies (Fawcett, 320). "Press work' and 'press departments' were a regular feature of women's organizations: favourable coverage was seen as an indication of progress in changing public attitudes more generally.[vi] Prime Minister Asquith had provided a motivation when he set a pre-requisite for the introduction of women's franchise legislation: that a majority of 'public opinion' should be in favour. How to measure this was not easy, in the absence of a referendum, or today's finely tuned opinion polls, focus groups et.al.. Therefore Fleet Street newspapers provided crucial evidence, both for and against: 'the battle for press support, or at least attention, explains much of the strategy adopted.' (Harrison in ed. Shattock and Wolff, 1982, 273). Yet in terms of the impact on the 'public' press from 1911 onwards, Pugh considers that militancy actually hindered progress (2000, 212): although this may have been the case, from the advertisers' standpoint, regular, well documented activity in the public sphere provided a supply of intelligence on which to base their marketing decisions.

Votes for Women used the failings of the national press to persuade readers to support their own organ instead. As the WSPU annual report stated: 'Owing to the Press boycott, this paper (*The Suffragette*) is an indispensable means of communication between the Union and the public.' (1913, 17). Even the so-called boycotts of suffrage activity by the mainstream press could prompt advertising income for the movement's own papers: in 1911 the *Standard* advertised in Votes for Women that its women's section would break the 'conspiracy of silence' and the boycott that suffragettes were complaining

about (27 October, 59). As the organisation itself noted: 'At the present time when ordinary National Press (sic) is closing down its columns more and more against suffrage news, boycotting peaceful propaganda and distorting militant action, no one can understand aright (sic) what is going on who is not a regular reader of our paper' (WSPU, 1910). Frederick Pethick-Lawrence complained that proprietors and editors deliberately wanted to 'check the advance of the Woman Suffrage Movement' (*Votes for Women*, 25 June, 1909, 841) whilst Helen Swanick (first editor of the NUWSS paper *Common Cause*) later wrote: 'The censorship was extreme and grotesque.' (1935, 221).

Nevertheless, suffragette commercial appeal progressed irrespective of the politics: the pages of *Votes for Women* reveal a upwards trajectory in the number, size and visual appeal of advertising, as well as a gradual trend towards customisation of content for the specific newspaper market of readers. In 1907 there were very few display adverts, but by the first quarter of 1908 this was changing, with a steady increase throughout that year, albeit restricted mainly to services such as typewriters, photographers, fountain pens, tutors, and ubiquitous female toiletries. By early 1909, the scope of newspaper lay-out and visual appeal was changing – a cartoon front page, more photos, augmented by illustrative displays of hats and coats by department stores such as Derry and Toms and Peter Robinson. By July 1909 the classified section had mushroomed, and the range of fashion sales had extended to corsets, furs, shoes, and to brand names such as Jaeger and Lilly and Skinner, with promotions for special shows and events. Advertising display were now juxtaposed next to politics ('Questions in the House'), and regional campaign news (17 September, 1909, 1187). By 30 September, 1910, the newspaper typeface had improved, headlines were bigger, and were matched by fashion promotions on almost every page. Stores now included Debenham and Freebody, and William Owen. In the classified sections, customisation for the commercial constituency of militant activist was evident: Miss Rosa Leo addressed her advertisement 'To Suffragette Speakers ', offering training in voice production for public speaking'.

By 1913 the WSPU were devoting large newspaper sections of *The Suffragette* to supporters of 'the £250,000 Fund' and to the 'Indignation Fund' (7 February, 255), augmented by financial

contributions to 'Self-Denial week', that also provided scope for editorial features and reporting on related regional activities. By this time, retail display advertisements were appearing on these editorial pages, heralded by Harrods first-ever illustrative promotion (7 March, 1913, 337), on this occasion for knitted sports coats, along with many other competitor clothes stores. Front pages aimed to attract attention with a full page cartoon, except for one edition of *The Suffragette* –2 May, 1913 – when the page was completely blank except for one word ' RAIDED!!' (p.489). An inside article referred to police raids of the headquarters (p. 493), but even in the face of adversity, both newspapers projected an image in their pages of a self-sufficient community of interest centred on radical protest, one that today's advertising professionals would refer to as a 'niche market'.

Window smashing and advertisers

Advertisers themselves were beginning to adapt their messages to different newspaper readerships, as French's contemporary reflections indicate: 'The advertisement is like the chameleon – it changes its character with the medium in which it is printed. The character of the newspaper fixes the character of the advertisements printed on its pages, and vitally influences the returns flowing from them.' (1913, 175-6). Retailers devised their own advertisements specifically for individual suffrage events, usually connected to in-store displays. Derry and Toms advertised 'Charming Hats for the June 17th Demonstration. Special Display at Derry and Toms, Kensington High St.' (The Fashion Activist, N.D.) In 1913 Swan and Edgar composed a striking display advert for Common Cause newspaper that was headlined 'For the Pilgrimage' (a major cross-Britain NUWSS organised event that lasted several months), offering illustrations of sensible clothes to wear for outdoor campaigning, including a straw hat with a band in the National Union colours (Hels, 2009). It is interesting to note that the store was one of the first to have its windows smashed, in November 1911, when 220 women and three men were arrested, following attacks also on government offices, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily News*, Lyon's, Dunn's Hat Shop and a variety of small businesses. It was the first time that premises not connected with the government or the Liberal Party had been deliberately targeted (Kenney, 1924, 165-6).

Selfridge's suffrage sympathies seem to have given the store a short respite during the smashing rampages in November 1911 and March 1912, when 400 other shops were targeted. On 1 March, 150 women were given hammers, told exactly when to strike and how to avoid falling glass, targeting Oxford Street, Regent Street, and The Strand, including Liberty's, Marshall and Snelgrove, Burberry's, and Kodak, as well as foreign owned commercial premises. Mrs. Pankhurst and 123 other women were arrested (*The Times*, 2 and 4 March, 1912). Then in February 1913 Sarah Benett of the Women's Freedom League broke one of Selfridge's windows, in protest against the government's withdrawal of the planned Franchise Bill, receiving a prison sentence of 6 months. Yet Selfridge did not press charges when the episode came to court. Admittedly, the costs of window repair were modest: two windows had to be replaced at £30 each (*The Suffragette*, 14 February, 1913, 276).

Nevertheless, the question still arises: why did militants bite the hand that fed them? Elizabeth Robbins, who was prolific in her journalism in defence of militants, observed in 'Sermon in Stones', published by the *Contemporary Review* at the time of the window smashing: 'Unnerving as are the particular scenes under consideration (even to think about), there is in them an implication more unnerving still. For we have here hundreds of women ready to accept disapproval (and all that may involve), not only of the powers that be, and not only of the general public, but of their dearest friends and staunchest followers - if by that single sacrifice, or any other, they can break through the apathy that makes men and women permit the greater evils that afflict the world' (April, 1912, 493-501).

Initially retailers feared they would lose business from non-militants who could be deterred in case they were mistaken for a suffragette (Rappaport, 2001, 216), but according to a WSPU leaflet, 'Window Breaking: To One Who Has Suffered' (WSPU, N.D., LSE, Women's Library) retail thinking was misguided: they should support the vote for women by putting pressure on the government. Suffragettes are friends of the traders, with shared interests. Therefore the WSPU saw no inconsistency in setting up newspaper seller pitches outside the very shops they had attacked. Moreover, *The Suffragette* called for further volunteers to take on the task during 'Suffragette Week'

(18 April, 1913, 447), following up with a double page spread the following week on 'How to Sell *The Suffragette* in Suffragette Week' (pp.476-477).

Politicians were the real enemy, but smashing of their windows had proved to be an inadequate strategy, according to Christabel Pankhurst, author of another leaflet headed 'Broken Windows' (16 April, 1912) : 'More drastic measures have been proved to be essential to gain the genuine concession that we seek……the cost of repairing Government windows has fallen upon them too lightly. That is why private property has now been attacked.' (WSPU, LSE, Women's Library). This challenges the accuracy of Maclaren's suggestion that the motivation for window smashing was class defence against the erosion of class by department stores, whose mass production of 'Prêt-à-Porter' was leading to greater access, standardisation in sizing and style, meaning that fashion was no longer the premise of the upper classes.

Any re-interpretation of suffragette window smashing as a form of upper class Ludditism against new developments in the fashion industry ignores the evidence: shopkeepers were to be punished for not lobbying the government in support of giving women the vote. WSPU statements such as the Annual Report explained: 'Not all the London shopkeepers had at that time realised the futility and unfairness of laying the blame for window – breaking (sic) upon the militants instead of upon the government. Therefore there was clamour for drastic punishment.' (WSPU,1913, 11). This message was further encapsulated in a front page cartoon in which a 'shopwalker' (shop assistant) points to a politician, and says to a policeman 'Please take Mr. Hobhouse[vii]in charge, it is he who has incited the women to violence' (*Votes for Women*, 8 March, 2012, 349). Conversely, a Tottenham Court Road jeweller displayed an announcement in the window: 'Ladies, if we had the power to grant, you should have the Vote right away. Please don't smash these windows, they are not Insured (sic).' *Votes for Women* replied: 'We would suggest to the elector in question that he makes his appeal to the wrong people. He should turn it into a threat, and convey it to the Government who represent him.' (14 February, 1913, 284).

Evidence of newspaper synergy between editorials on militancy and advertising consumerism continued, epitomised by a full page feature article in *The Suffragette* headed 'What Shall We Do with the Militant Suffragette?' by the Reverend E.A. Mould, vicar of St. James's, Barrow-in-Furness on 21 March 1913, alongside a one column full page illustrative display advertisement headed 'Smart, Inexpensive Millinery for Town and Country', with drawings of women in hats. Clearly D.H. Evans department store had the answer after their windows had been smashed – sell the perpetrators a hat! This longer term relationship between suffragettes and advertisers was summed up somewhat quaintly by a contemporary advertiser observation: 'At present many advertisers seem to consider the buying public in the light of a crowd of people who must pass through the turnstiles they have erected, and deposit coins for the privilege. Many publishers of advertising mediums (newspapers and periodicals) appear to believe that they have collated their subscription list for the benefit of the concerns that advertise in their pages, and therefore support them. They get together a company of people, secure entry into their homes, and say to the advertisers, "Here are so and so many people who have got some money you can get if you advertise with us.' (French, 1913, 161).

Advertisers seemed to care less about the politics of their market than the *Votes for Women* printers. A front page announcement in bold on 8 March 1912 explained: 'SIGNIFICANT ! The Editors who are responsible for *Votes for Women* in the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Pethick Lawence beg to inform their readers that the blank spaces in this issue do not represent lack of interesting subject matter for publication, but mark the suppression by the printers of articles, comments, and historical facts considered by them to be inflammatory matter' (p. 349). On the next page, headings such as 'Why Destroy Private Property?' remain, but with no text – instead a large display advertisement by Debenham and Freebody takes precedence.

From the list of 75 West End traders whose windows were smashed in March 1912, most larger stores continued with big display advertisements in *Votes for Women*, including T.& J. Harries, D.H.Evans, Marshall and Snelgrove, Swan and Edgar, Burberry. After *The Suffragette* was launched, the Pethick Lawrences returned to *Votes for Women*, and many stores such as Peter Robinson, Whiteleys and

Debenham and Freebody, started to advertise in both papers. Contemporary advertisers viewed newspapers as the prime market: 'Newspapers are, within their limited field, undoubtedly the best advertising mediums.' (French, 1913, 176). Yet advertising systems were still in their infancy, lacking the more sophisticated details of focus and market analysis that today's industry manifests. This may be one reason that the majority of advertisers did not withdraw funding from WSPU newspapers following window attacks on their premises – cost benefit analysis of strategic placements in the form of independent or academic study, was not available to them: 'The whole question of advertising mediums is in an unsatisfactory and chaotic condition. Nothing is known about it except that which comes from publishers and the experience of advertisers.' (ibid, 195).

However, in the case of suffragettes, advertisers did have ample intelligence from which to construct a customer profile. As Catterall (2000) points out, marketers have traditionally sought to understand the details of women's lives in order to adjust products and services to their needs, and retailers acknowledged this through the dialogue that they engaged in with suffragettes. *The Harrodian Gazette* not only acknowledged an arson attack on an in-store pillar box (April 2013), the corporate monthly magazine also managed to laugh at suffragettes, whilst still soliciting their business. A cartoon (June 2013) entitled 'Obeying the Law' showed a militant shop supervisor instructing a member of her staff, with the caption:

> '*Suffragette Leader:* Then your programme for the week will be as follows:-
> *Monday* – You will supervise the attempt to set fire to the Law Courts.
> *Tuesday* – Throw a bomb from the Ladies Gallery in the Houses of Parliament.
> *Wednesday* – Disorganise the electric train service by setting fire to the power house in Lots Road, Chelsea.
> *Thursday* – Attend the 127th meeting of the Marconi Inquiry and liven them up by distributing cayenne pepper, etc.
> *Friday* – You will travel by aeroplane over the Crystal Palace and drop bombs through the glass roof.
> *Saturday* – You will report here for further duties and, well ----er---presuming that we come under the 'Shop Hours Act' ---TAKE HALF A DAY OFF!!! (sic)'

The Canadian Pacific Company, who along with the Canadian Grand Trunk Railway, had also continued to advertise despite having their windows smashed, were obliged to board up their windows in Cockspur Street. There they posted a notice: 'We are looking for settlers, not Suffragettes', but as

Votes for Women pointed out, 'the Suffragettes *are* settlers' (14 February, 1913,291). Yet the companies became one of the newspaper's biggest advertisers, subsequently publishing and promoting a pamphlet about opportunities for women in Canada, illustrated by a well-dressed country girl looking at a cow (*The Suffragette*, 14 March, 1913, 359). The newspaper reciprocated the favour by publishing a feature on 'Women's Position in Canada' by Barbara Wylie (28 March, 1913, 388).

Mutual recognition also emerged in customized promotions with humourous political puns. A half page display advert in *The Suffragette* started with the headline in capitals: ALL LADIES VOTE, then in small print below 'crème Vilmar, the Skin Preparation of today. If applied, you will have 'NO RED HANDS, A SMOOTH VELVETY COMPLEXION however long you are in the cold. Housework cannot spoil the hands if Crème Vilmar is used. NO DIVISION in the opinions of those who have used it. Millionnairess and Mill-hand agree. It is not greasy - Does not promote hair-growth (sic, 7 February, 1913,267).'

Of course, retail advertisers preferred the millionaire image to the mill hand, and targeted accordingly: next to a full page article that reported 'A Triumphant Year! Great Increase in Subscriptions', Derry and Toms presented a full page one column display advertisement for a 'Carbonide' fur safe, 'A Wonderful Invention for the safe-keeping of furs at home.' Similarly Christabel 'now looked to heroic individuals or influential (generally rich) women to win the struggle.' (Connolly, 2010): certainly the financial strength and the ability of the WSPU to attract individual donations were both impressive. This factor contributed to the confidence identified by Elizabeth Robins earlier. Donations did not diminish as the Union's tactics became more extreme. The Union's records show an increase in the number of large individual donations up to 1914, and an increase in subscriptions. Regular rallies at the Albert Hall continued to be successful at fund raising: at the 20th such meeting on 15 June, 1912, the Union collected £6000, and on 28th March, while Mrs Pankhurst was still in prison for breaking Asquith's windows on 1 March, £10,000 was raised (WSPU, 1912). At the 10 July Albert Hall meeting, at which George Lansbury spoke, a record amount of £15,000 was raised (Kenney, 1924,

223). In the newspaper, every person was listed for donations, including hundreds of 'anon', with the annual report for 1912-13 citing a total of £28,157,19s, 0d (WSPU, 1913, 24-58).

When letter destruction and arson were added to the tactical palette, the new indiscriminate policy became 'a calculated political act' (Bearman, 2005, CXX, 486,374). According to Annie Kenney, Christabel knew that burning would frighten parliament (1924, 187). In Jan.1913, only 30 women were arrested for window smashing in Whitehall. *The Suffragette* subsequently reported that 'A Policy of Guerilla Warfare was Announced' at a WSPU conference (31 January, 1913, 240). The usual double page weekly feature on the latest direct action referred in headlines to a 'Reign of Terror – Continued Destruction of Property' (18 April, 1913, 452-3). Yet the economic damage from such militancy was minimal. It was precisely an awareness of this that prompted *The Suffragette* headline 'Women Cheaper Than Property' for a report on the trial of the suffragette who set fire to Kew Pavilion, and was sentenced to eighteen months in jail (14 March, 1913, 342). Christabel had been arguing since 1911 that 'It is actually cheaper to pay for mending a shop window than to maintain for a considerable period, several female relatives.' (*Votes for Women*,1st December, 142). If property was the government's priority, then property was a target (Connolly, 2010).

Conclusions

Evidence of connections between ideology and economics provides a good reason for scholars to widen their lines of enquiry to encompass how commercial infrastructures relate to editorial aspects. The indication is that dissenters, if a significantly well organised force, were in a strong position to influence advertisers as well as journalists, particularly if they had their own robust counter culture. Suffrage organisations were financially strong and thus constituted a specific market for sales. From the retailers' standpoint, the financial cost of broken windows paled into insignificance compared to the bigger perception of a consumer market with purchasing potential for commercial promotion. This was a time when the advertising industry was beginning to seek out and to aim to understand niche readerships in print publications.

Although the window smashing campaign represented a hardening of tactics and a move away from collective mass mobilisations, in their newspapers militants appeared well organised, strong and focused. Retailers clearly perceived and reacted to the WSPU's politicised consumer culture by customising to it in a way that meant commercial profit took precedence over more the minimal cost and disruption of window smashing, that could even be laughed off. The observations and analysis of contemporaries, as well as the WSPU records and newspapers, verify the level of passion and evangelical devotion. A thousand women went to jail for a cause that became almost a religious crusade, but one that emphasized both tactics and fashion. Arguably, market identity was so strong that it overcame any alienation caused by window smashing. This combination provided evidence that suffragettes understood marketing in a way that resonates with 21st century concerns. As Barbara Norden puts it: 'Eat Your Heart Out, Saatchi and Saatchi – the Pankhursts got there first.' (1992:35). It is difficult not to conclude that the relationship between politics and retail consumerism is more entwined in the case of the WSPU than is sometimes acknowledged.

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[i] The strategy of further public confrontations and acts of civil disobedience dated back to 1905, at which point the Daily Mail invented the word 'suffragettes' to describe the militants, as opposed to 'suffrage supporters' for moderates.

[ii] For more on this, see Furlough (1991).

[iii] This was a policy that Sylvia Pankhurst disagreed with. She defected to work with the East End Federation of Suffragettes (Chapman, 2013:140). However, by 1913 The Suffragette was promoting campaigns such as the 'Working Women's Deputation to the Government' on working conditions and wages (31 January).

[iv] The 'frondeuse' tradition of journalism had originated during the 17th century rebellion against Mazarin, and literally meant a 'slingshot'– a female David against the male Goliath.

[v] In 1912 the Pethick-Lawrences were ousted by Christabel. Frederick Pethick-Lawrence explained the difference between them: 'I took the view that the window smashing had aroused a new popular opposition, because it was for the first time an attack on private property....there was need for a sustained educational campaign to make the public understand the reasons for such extreme courses.....Christabel took the view that such popular opposition as there might be was not essentially different ....and that the right method of overcoming it was to repeat and intensify the attack'(1943, 98-9).

[vi] See Elizabeth Crawford (1999:450-62) for a reference guide to key suffrage periodicals and the attitude of the main dailies to the suffrage movements and Chapman (2013:117-141, 145-170) for an analysis of the implications of the above for gendered cultural citizenship.

[vii] Sir Charles Hobhouse was a member of Asquith's cabinet as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.